

MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

During the Session of 1888, a Select Committee was appointed by the Senate to enquire as to the value of that part of the Dominion lying north of the Saskatchewan watershed, east of the Rocky Mountains and west of Hudson's Bay, comprising the Great Mackenzie Basin, its extent of navigable rivers, lakes and sea coast, of agricultural and pastoral lands, its fisheries, forests and mines. According to the report of this Committee, presented by their Chairman the Honourable John Schultz, M.D., 2nd May, 1888, they arrived at the following conclusions:—

NAVIGABLE NAVIGATION.

1st. The extent of the scope of the inquiry covers one million two hundred and sixty thousand square statutory miles, which area includes none of the islands of the Arctic Archipelago.  
2nd. Its coast line on the Arctic Ocean and Hudson's Bay measures about 5,000 miles, exclusive of inlets and deeply indented bays.  
3rd. Over one-half of this coast line is easily accessible to whaling and sealing crafts.

4th. The navigable coast lines of the larger lakes of the region in question amount to about 4,000 miles, while its total lacustrine area probably exceeds that of the eastern Canadian American chain of great lakes.

5th. That there is a river navigation of about 2,750 miles of which 1,390 miles are navigable for the whole year.

6th. That there is a total of about 6,500 miles of continuous lakes, coast and river navigation broken only in two places.

YUKON TERRITORY AND LAKE ST. JOHN REGION.

Fort Smith southward on the Great Slave River, and the latter being a stretch of 70 miles on the Athabasca, of questionable navigation above Fort McMurray, down which flat boats or scows passed but cannot ascend, and which about 50 miles of wagon road would overcome, while some improvement of the light might render the whole river navigable.

8th. That with suitable steam-tugs this river and lake navigation may be connected with Victoria and Vancouver by way of the mouth of the River Mackenzie, the Arctic Ocean and Behring Straits and Sea, and it is now connected on the south by 90 miles of wagon-road between Athabasca Landing and Edmonton, with navigable waters in the Saskatchewan River.

ARABLE AND PASTORAL LANDS.

Suitable for the growth of potatoes. 658,000  
barley 140,000  
wheat 318,000

The pastoral area is estimated at 860,000, of which 28,000 is open prairie, with occasional groves, the remainder being wooded more or less; 274,000 square miles, including the prairie, may be considered as arable land.

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## MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

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According to the report of this Committee, presented by their Chairman the Honourable John Schultz, M.D., 2nd May, 1888, they arrived at the following conclusions :—

## REGARDING NAVIGATION.

1st. The extent of the scope of the inquiry covers one million two hundred and sixty thousand square statutory miles, which area includes none of the islands of the Arctic Archipelago.

2nd. Its coast line on the Arctic Ocean and Hudson's Bay measures about 5,000 miles, exclusive of inlets and deeply indented bays.

3rd. Over one-half of this coast line is easily accessible to whaling and sealing crafts.

4th. The navigable coast lines of the larger lakes of the region in question, amount to about 4,000 miles, while its total lacustrine area probably exceeds that of the eastern Canadian American chain of great lakes.

5th. That there is a river navigation of about 2,750 miles, of which 1,390 are suitable for stern-wheel steamers, which, with their barges, may carry 300 tons; the remaining 1,360 miles, being deep enough for light draught sea-going steamers.

6th. That there is a total of about 6,500 miles of continuous lake, coast and river navigation, broken only in two places.

7th. That the two breaks in question are upon the Great Slave and Athabasca Rivers, the first being now overcome by a 20 miles waggon road from Fort Smith southward on the Great Slave River, and the latter being a stretch of 70 miles on the Athabasca, of questionable navigation above Fort McMurray, down which flat boats or scows descend but cannot ascend, and which about 50 miles of waggon road would overcome, while some improvement of the rapids might render the whole river navigable.

8th. That with suitable steam-crafts this river and lake navigation may be connected with Victoria and Vancouver, by way of the mouth of the River Mackenzie, the Arctic Ocean and Behring Straits and Sea, and it is now connected on the south by 90 miles of waggon-road between Athabasca Landing and Edmonton, with navigable waters in the Saskatchewan River.

## ARABLE AND PASTORAL LANDS.

	Probable area in Square Miles.
Suitable for the growth of potatoes.....	656,000
do                      barley.....	407,000
do                      wheat .....	316,000

The pastoral area is estimated at 860,000, of which 26,000 is open prairie, with occasional groves, the remainder being wooded more or less; 274,000 square miles, including the prairie, may be considered as arable land.



Spring flowers and the buds of deciduous trees appear as early, north of Great Slave Lake, as at Winnipeg, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Kingston or Ottawa, and earlier along the Peace, Liard and other western affluents of the Great Mackenzie River, where the climate resembles that of Western Ontario.

#### FISHERIES, FORESTS AND MINES.

According to the evidence received by the Committee, the quantity of sea and fresh water fishes is sufficient to supply a great portion of the North American Continent.

The forest area has upon it a growth of trees well suited for all purposes of house and ship building, for mining, railway and bridging purposes, far in excess of its own needs.

As regards the mines of this vast region, little is known of the portion east of the Mackenzie River and north of the Great Slave Lake. On the western side of the Mackenzie and along the head waters of its affluents, the Peel, Liard and Peace Rivers the auriferous area is estimated at from 150,000 to 200,000 square miles. Silver is found on the Upper Liard and Peace Rivers, copper on the Copper-Mine River which may be connected with an eastern arm of Great Bear Lake by a tramway of 40 miles. Iron, graphite, ochre, brick and pottery clay, mica, gypsum, lime and sandstone, sand for glass and moulding, and asphaltum are all known to exist. The petroleum area along the Athabasca River, Great Slave River, Little Slave and Great Slave Lakes and the Mackenzie River, is so extensive as to justify the belief that it is the greatest in America, if not in the world, and that eventually it will supply the larger part of North America and be shipped from Churchill or some other great northern Hudson's Bay port to England. The Committee recommend that a tract of about 40,000 square miles of the petroleum region be reserved from sale, between Athabasca Lake, Peace River and Little Slave Lake.

Salt and sulphur deposits are less extensive, but the former is found in crystals equal in purity to the best rock salt and in highly saline springs, while the latter is found in the form of pyrites. There are extensive coal and lignite deposits on the lower Mackenzie and elsewhere. Scientific exploration has not yet extended north of Great Slave Lake.

The chief present commercial product of the country is its furs; the region in question is the last great fur preserve of the world.

The Indian population is sparse, and, having never lived in large communities, is peaceable.

According to the evidence received, the distances which separate the navigable waters of the Mackenzie Basin from the eastern and western sea coasts, and from navigable rivers and railways to the south and south-east, are as follows :—

From the Head of Great Slave Lake to head of Chesterfield Inlet, 320 miles; from the head of Athabasca Lake to the harbour of Churchill, 440 miles; from Fort McMurray at the junction of the Clearwater with the Athabasca, below the 70 miles of questionable navigation, to the following places on the Saskatchewan: Prince Albert, 300 miles; Fort Pitt, 220 miles; Victoria, 179 miles; Edmonton, 225 miles; from Calgary, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, to Athabasca Landing, on the Athabasca River, 250 miles; from head of Little Slave Lake to Peace River Landing on the Peace River, 65

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miles; from Hazleton, on the Skeena River, to Peace River, in the Pass, 150 miles; from Port Mumford, on the Stikeen River to Fort Liard, on the Liard River, 370 miles.

The Committee state that the region in question occupies an area greater than the Australian continent or two-thirds of Europe, covering part of the British Islands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria and a part of France and Russia.

### MACKENZIE RIVER.

The first expedition down this river was that of Alexander Mackenzie, who had been employed during eight years at the trading post of Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca.

He left the fort 3rd June, 1789, descended the Great Slave River, reached Great Slave Lake on the 9th and the Mackenzie on the 29th. He passed the outlet of Great Bear Lake River 5th July, and reached the end of Whale Island at the mouth of the Mackenzie, on the Polar Ocean, 15th July. On his voyage down the river he found various encampments of Indians, most of whom refused to accompany him to the Polar Ocean, being in dread of the Esquimaux who resided along the coast.

The various forts from Chipewyan down the Mackenzie to the Polar Sea had not apparently been built at the time of Mackenzie's journey in 1789. They appear to have been erected prior to the two expeditions of Sir John Franklin, 1819 to 1822 and 1825 to 1827, except Fort Confidence, which was erected in 1825 by Sir John Richardson, one of his staff, at the north-east end of Great Bear Lake and Fort Enterprise, which was erected in August and September, 1820, by Franklin himself during his journey to the Copper-Mine River.

The Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies built forts in opposition to each other, until their coalition in 1826-27.

Franklin descended the river to its mouth in August, 1825, and returned to spend the winter at a fort built by the North-West Company at the foot or west end of Great Bear Lake in September. This fort was named Franklin.

He descended the river a second time to its mouth, with his assistants, Back and Richardson, 24th June, 1826.

From the mouth he proceeded westward with two boats along the coast of the Polar Sea to Icy Reef, and Richardson proceeded also with two boats eastward to the mouth of the Copper-Mine River.

Franklin returned by the Mackenzie to Fort Franklin, 21st September, 1826.

Richardson returned by the Copper-Mine River and the portage at east end of Great Bear Lake to Fort Franklin, 1st September, 1826.

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For further particulars see in Part IV, Franklin's Three Expeditions.)

## MACKENZIE RIVER.

Average width from Fort Simpson to Polar Sea,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles.

Sixteen to twenty-seven fathoms deep at mouth, in the ocean.

Shoalest portions 7 to 8 feet, up stream.

Narrowest portion  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile.

Widest portion 3 to 4 miles with islands.

From mouth on Polar Ocean up to Fort Good Hope

the distance is estimated at about..... 310 Stat. M.

Thence up to Fort Simpson..... 484 do

Thence to Fort Resolution, Great Slave Lake..... 324.5 do

Total statute miles.....1,118.5

There are rapids near Fort Good Hope at about 310 miles above the mouth of the Mackenzie; but boats ascend them with lines without unloading.

In June, July and August the temperature is generally very hot, with occasional thunderstorms and rains; the nights are very cold; summer rains begin about the first of May; snow falls about the tenth of October; the river freezes over about the same time, and the ice breaks up about the first of June.

FOREST TREES.—Birch, poplar, balsams, hemlock, pine and the red willow.

MINERALS.—Red earth, sulphur, coal, salt, white earth, limestone, iron-stone, sandstone.

PLANTS.—Strawberries, gooseberries, cranberries, blueberries, lichens or tripe à la roche, wild tea.

All along the Mackenzie and the Athabasca, the fur animals are :—Beaver, marten, silver fox, lynx, otter, cross fox, blue fox, red fox, musquash or muskrat, mink, black and cinnamon bears, wolves, wolverines, moose-deer and hares. The food animals amongst these are the beaver and bear, moose and hares.

Towards the ocean, the musk-ox and reindeer are found along the coast. —*See lists of furs sold in 1887, in London, and of furs received in Montreal, 1887–88–89, on next page.*

In the valley of the Mackenzie, wood and white partridges, geese of all kinds (spring and fall), cranes, waxies, swans and ducks are abundant; the ducks and geese arrive about middle of May, and leave about beginning of October.

The fish in the river are chiefly loche, whitefish, and the inconnu, resembling salmon, averaging 10 to 12 pounds and sometimes 30 to 40 pounds in weight; in the adjacent lakes whitefish and trout are chiefly found.

Along the coast, seals, porpoises and whales are numerous.

Steamers can navigate the Mackenzie throughout, from 1st of July to 1st of October.



MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

NORTHERN FURS CHIEFLY FROM THE MACKENZIE BASIN.

ONE year's catch offered for sale in 1887, in London, by the Hudson's Bay Company, and by C. M. Lampson & Co., consignees of many of the furs of British North America.

Description.	Number.	Description.	Number.
Badger .....	3,739	Lynx .....	14,520
Bear, all kinds .....	15,942	Marten .....	98,342
Beaver .....	104,279	Mink .....	376,223
Ermine .....	4,116	Musk Ox .....	198
Fisher .....	7,192	Musquash .....	2,485,368
Fox, blue .....	1,440	do extra black .....	13,944
do cross .....	6,785	Otter .....	14,439
do grey .....	31,597	Rabbit .....	114,824
do kitt .....	290	Sable .....	3,517
do red .....	85,022	Skunk .....	682,794
do silver .....	1,967	Swan .....	57
do white .....	10,257	Wolf .....	7,156
Hair seal, dry .....	13,478	Wolverine .....	1,581

Some idea of the size and importance of the fur trade may be obtained from the following figures of the receipts of furs at the Hudson's Bay Company's warehouse, in Montreal, during the last three years. The figures have been kindly furnished by the manager in Montreal:—

Kinds of Furs.	Number of Skins.		
	1887.	1888.	1889.
Bear .....	1,399	1,528	2,037
Beaver .....	22,848	22,174	18,787
Fisher .....	1,197	1,120	1,377
Fox .....	669	756	1,150
Lynx .....	2,655	3,830	4,107
Marten .....	19,264	18,986	16,708
Mink .....	10,002	7,737	6,420
Musquash .....	81,103	74,572	55,285
Otter .....	2,768	2,550	3,010
Skunk .....	228	420	478
Wolverine .....	24	21	27
Total .....	142,157	133,714	109,386

There has been, it will be seen, a steady falling off in the number of skins, though the three years aggregate a total of 385,257 skins, and it seems evident that some such course as that suggested by the committee of the Senate is, if feasible, highly desirable, if the principal fur-bearing animals are to be saved from gradual extinction.

MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

OPENING and Closing of Navigation.

FORT McMURRAY—Latitude 56° 40'.

Year.	Ice Broke Up.	First Drift Ice.	Ice Set. — River Closed.
1878.....	18th April.....	27th October.....	No record.
1879.....	No record.....	26th do.....	1st November.
1880.....	2nd May.....	14th November.....	No record.
1881.....	21st April.....	14th October.—The river became clear of ice for some time, after which drift ice again appeared, until finally the ice set and closed the river....	12th November.
1882.....	24th do.....	1st November.....	8th do
1883.....	25th do.....	30th October.....	10th do
1884.....	27th do.....	18th do.....	28th October.
1885.....	9th do.....	23rd do The river became clear of ice for some time, after which drift ice again appeared, until finally the ice set and closed the river.....	13th November.
1886.....	16th do.....	4th November.....	14th do
1887.....	27th do.....	22nd October.....	24th October.
1888.....	4th May.....	3rd November.....	9th November.

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OPENING and Closing of Navigation, etc.

FORT SIMPSON—Latitude 61° 52' N.

Year.	Ice Broke Up.	First Drift Ice.	River Closed.
1876.....	14th May.....	4th November.....	7th November.
1877.....	8th do.....	1st do.....	28th do
1878.....	8th do.....	16th October.....	26th do
1879.....	3rd do.....	12th November.....	20th do
1880.....	7th do.....	2nd do.....	26th do
1881.....	13th do.....	12th October.....	18th do
1882.....	7th do.....	1st November.....	30th do
1883.....	1st do.....	25th October. The first drift ice in the Mackenzie this year was seen 1st Nov....	20th do
1884.....	12th do.....	11th October.....	18th do
1885.....	2nd do.....	28th do.....	20th do
1886.....	13th do.....	13th do.....	25th do

The dates of the breaking of the ice in the Mackenzie, above the Liard, for the same year are as follows :—

1876.....	Not given.....	1882.....	20th May.
1877.....	19th May.....	1883.....	5th do
1878.....	17th do.....	1884.....	14th do
1879.....	19th do.....	1885.....	7th do
1880.....	19th do.....	1886.....	27th do
1881.....	19th do.....		



The river is always open some time before the lake. In the latter, the ice floats around for some weeks before it is sufficiently broken up to pass down the river. In 1888 it was well on in July before the lake was clear enough to enable the steamer to proceed to Fort Smith, but that was an unusually late season. As a rule, navigation on the lake, opens in the last days of June. At Fort McPherson on Peel River, the ice does not generally leave until the 1st of June. On Lake Athabasca the ice goes a little earlier than on Great Slave Lake, but this does not affect the question of the navigability of the Mackenzie, which cannot be reached until Great Slave Lake is clear.

### MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

#### OPENING and Closing of Navigation, etc.

NEW FORT NORMAN—Latitude 64° 54' 3" N.

Year.	Ice Broke Up.	First Snow.	First Ice Formed.	River Closed.
1872.....	Not given.....	28th September.....	7th October.....	8th November.
1873.....	17th May.....	28th do.....	21st do.....	12th do
1874.....	25th do.....	15th October.....	2nd November.....	18th do
1875.....	24th do.....	Not given.....	23rd October.....	9th do
1876.....	19th do.....	10th October.....	13th do.....	9th do
1877.....	12th do.....	25th September.....	18th do.....	Not given.
1878.....	Not given.....	28th do.....	22nd do.....	17th November
1879.....	9th May.....	3rd October.....	20th do.....	7th do
1880.....	22nd do.....	7th do.....	22nd do.....	12th do
1881.....	Not given.....	2nd do.....	7th do.....	12th do
1882.....	14th May.....	9th do.....	14th do.....	14th do
1883.....	11th do River was not clear of ice this year until 28th May	9th do.....	24th do.....	10th do
1884.....	28th May.....	Rest of record lost.....	No record.....	No record.
1885.....	No record.....	No record.....	No record.....	No record.
1886.....	do.....	do.....	18th October.....	13th November.
1887.....	24th May.....	23rd September.....	5th do.....	8th do
1888.....	19th do.....			



## MACKENZIE RIVER REGION.

## INDIAN POPULATION.

Places.	Total.
Resolution, Great Slave Lake.....	300
Fort Smith, Great Slave River.....	200
Chipewyan, Lake Athabasca.....	500
Fond du Lac do.....	250
Vermilion, Peace River.....	300
McMurray, Junction of Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers.....	150
Total.....	1,700

## WHITE POPULATION.

Places.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Rampart House, River Yukon Region.....	2	1	1	2	6
La Pierre's House and Fort McPherson.....	11	6	12	9	38
Good Hope, River Mackenzie Region.....	8	4	6	8	26
Norman do.....	2	2	1	4	9
Liard, Liard River do.....	7	4	4	5	20
Nelson do.....	5	3	5	3	16
Simpson do.....	14	6	9	10	39
Providence do.....	13	14	8	7	42
Rae do.....	8	4	8	6	26
Big Island do.....	5	4	9	8	26
Totals.....	75	48	63	62	248

## INDIANS.

Rampart House.....	80	68	73	65	286
La Pierre's House.....	36	41	25	39	141
McPherson.....	93	87	95	76	351
Good Hope.....	178	142	132	131	583
Norman.....	74	76	58	46	254
Liard.....	46	47	75	48	216
Nelson.....	44	42	66	57	209
Simpson.....	130	136	124	110	500
Providence.....	92	106	142	116	456
Rae.....	128	147	188	152	615
Esquimaux at McPherson.....	80	100	80	90	350
Totals.....	981	992	1,058	930	3,961

# MONTREAL TO THE MOUTH OF THE MACKENZIE, ON THE POLAR OCEAN.

PRESENT ROUTE by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Calgary, thence by waggon road to Edmonton and Athabasca Landing, thence by water.

LOCALITIES.	SITUATION.	STATUTE MILES.				
		Waggon Road.	Railway	York Boats or Portages.	Steamer	Total from Montreal.
Montreal.....	On the River St. Lawrence..					
Calgary .....	Alberta District, N.W.T. ....		2,264			2,264
Edmonton.....	North Saskatchewan River. Air Line, 172 miles.....	196				2,460
Athabasca Landing.....	River Athabasca. Air Line, 86 miles.....	96				2,556
Grand Rapids ...	River Athabasca.....				168	2,724
Fort McMurray.....	do .....			83		2,807
Athabasca Lake.....	do .....				189	2,996
Fort Chipewyan.....	Lake Athabasca, north side..				5	3,001
Fort Smith Portage.....	Great Slave River.....				102	3,103
do Foot of Portage.	do west side..			14		3,117
Fort Resolution, on south side of Great Slave Lake.....	do .....				190	3,307
West end of Great Slave Lake	Great Slave Lake.....				121	3,428
Fort Providence.....	Between Beaver and Little Lake, on the Mackenzie River.....				46	3,474
Fort Simpson.....	On Island at Junction of Riv- ers Mackenzie and Liard....				158	3,632
Fort Wrigley.....	Mackenzie River.....				134	3,766
Fort Norman, 22 miles below Old Fort.....	do .....				180	3,946
Great Bear River, East.....	do .....				0·2	3,946·2
Ramparts .....	do .....				160·4	4,106·6
New Fort Good Hope.....	do .....				8·8	4,115·4
Red River, West.....	do .....				214·6	4,330·0
Peel River Junction.....	32 miles below Fort McPh- erson.....				28·0	4,358·0
Mouth of River Mackenzie..	On the Polar Ocean.....				67·0	4,425·0
	Totals.....	292	2,264	97	1,772·0	4,425·2



COMPARATIVE DISTANCES, WINNIPEG TO LIVERPOOL,  
ENGLAND.

Routes.	Statute Miles.	Geographical Miles.
Winnipeg to York Factory, or mouth of Nelson River, on west side of Hudson Bay.....	750	651
York Factory to Hudson Strait, at Digges Islands. ....	630	547
Hudson Strait to Atlantic, at south end of Resolution Island, on north side, or to Cape Chudleigh, on south side of outlet of Strait, into the Ocean.....	500	434
From Hudson Strait, across the Atlantic, to Liverpool, England.....	2,162	1,875
*Total—Winnipeg to Liverpool, <i>via</i> York Factory, Hudson's Bay..	4,042	3,507
Winnipeg to Quebec, by Canadian Pacific Railway, direct, <i>via</i> St. Martin's Junction, not calling at Montreal.....	1,569	1,361
Quebec to Liverpool, <i>via</i> Strait of Belle Isle.....	3,067	2,661
†Total—Winnipeg to Liverpool, <i>via</i> Quebec—Summer Route. ....	4,636	4,022
Winnipeg to Montreal, <i>via</i> Canadian Pacific Railway.....	1,423	1,234
Montreal to St. John, New Brunswick, <i>via</i> Short Line, Sherbrooke and Mattawamkeag.....	481	417
St. John to Liverpool.....	3,112	2,700
Total—Winnipeg to Liverpool, <i>via</i> St. John, New Brunswick—Winter Route.....	5,016	4,351

\* Hudson's Bay and Strait generally navigable from 15th July to 15th October. August and September are the safest months for navigating Hudson Strait.

† For route *via* Cape Race, add 182 statute miles, 158 geographical miles.





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Territory and Lake St. John  
region.

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